Mistress of the Situation.

BY JENNIE CHAPPELL, AUTHOR OF "BY THE WAY OF THE VALLEY," ETC.

"'I've found her—I've found Mary!' I gasped." *p.* 83.

CHAPTER XI.

"K. M. T."

SHORTLY after the disturbing events related in my preceding chapter, Edric Moore went away to some quiet spot on the west coast to get up his strength. Edith did not see him again before his departure, and my heart ached for her. Keith looked in on him once or twice, however, and accompanied him to the station to see him off on his journey.

No communication of any importance as far as our general difficulties were concerned appeared to transpire at these interviews, which, considering the very strained relations that existed all round at that wretched time, could hardly, I should imagine, have been other than stiff and uncomfortable. Keith, however, did go so far as to confide to me his conviction that Mr. Moore knew more about Mary Ray than he chose to confess, but also that he seemed to consider himself, rather than Edith, the injured individual, inasmuch as she had so readily lost faith in his honour and integrity.

"Of course," said I, "everyone is in the right from his or her own point of view, and therefore always waits for the other side to make the first move towards a reconciliation. That is why feuds and misunderstandings sometimes last so long. If it were considered the proper thing for the one *least* in the wrong to take the first step, we should without a doubt have estranged friends rushing into each other's arms like anything!"

"And, after all," said my brother, reflectively, "that was God's way, and we ought to follow Him. Though the world was *all* in the wrong, and He is the All-Perfect, the offer of reconciliation came from Him."

"Well, you and I have certainly done no harm to Mary in any way," said I. "But we can make no friendly advances to her, not knowing where to find her."

Keith groaned. I knew that the sorest part of the whole affair to him was the fact that Mary had been capable of treating us as she did. Invent what excuse for her one might—and I can honestly say that I had ransacked my imagination for reasons that would make her conduct look less unkind—that fact remained, and it hurt.

"I wonder if Edric knows where she is?" was my next observation.

"I think not—I really believe not," Keith answered. "Though he could not deny that there had been corre-

spondence between them—on a matter of business, he says—I don't fancy he has heard anything of her since she left this house."

Mary Ray, in so suddenly taking her departure from us, had unavoidably left behind her a few articles of clothing which, at the time of her flight, had been at the wash. I remembered noticing, soon after she came, that her linen was all marked "K. M. T.," and had rather unsuspiciously explained this to myself by the probability that it had been given to her by some better-off friend. This hypothesis was supported by the fact that the garments in question were superior in quality to what one would suppose suitable for the outfit of a young person going into a situation for the first time, and also more elaborately trimmed. This circumstance recurred to me as I looked over the things which had been left on our hands. I felt convinced that herein lay a clue to much that had seemed inexplicable in connection with our ex-lady help. But the clue had been broken off by Mary herself, and to us, as matters stood, was useless.

Meanwhile, the weeks had been passing away, and the end of my temporary employment was near. Mrs. Perry's companion was coming back—contrary to Edith's hopes and mine!—and my occupation would be gone. The prospect was appalling. Four of us to be supported and rent paid on the earnings of Edith and Keith, which united did not amount to more than enough to keep a single individual in tolerable comfort! Vainly we referred to the records of past weeks in our housekeeping book, and purchased the same kinds and quantities of food as had been Mary's wont—the provisions obstinately refused to last half as long or prove nearly as satisfying under our management as when superintended by her.

"How *did* she do it?" sighed Edith in despair. "You were with her much more than I, Sissie. How was it that you didn't learn more hints? What one person can do—and she nobody so very clever or wonderful!" (with a dash of spite)—"surely another ought to be able to."

"She was a witch, I do believe!" I said, half in vexation at our failure, half in lingering admiration of Mary's capabilities. "I'm sure that, with all our care, we can't waste and mismanage to that extent."

The next day, Saturday, on arriving at Mrs. Perry's, as usual, about 10 a.m., I found the dear old lady beaming more genially than ever, and trotting about in a state of the most pleasurable excitement. One of her numerous grandsons, a schoolboy, was coming to spend the day with her, and was to bring his special chum along with him.

"Such a dear little lad, Miss Alden!" she assured me. "I know you'll fall in love with him the moment you see him. He's the image of what his dear father was at his age—he was my youngest but one. Eleven sweet babies, my love, did the good Lord send to Harry and me, and nine of them, thank His mercy, are alive still to be a blessing and a comfort to their mother in her old age (I shall enter my eighty-fourth year, my dear, on the next anniversary of Waterloo!); and between them they have made me grandma to thirty-three little ones."

I must confess I am no great admirer of boys—always excepting Keith, but he was such a dear fellow!—especially at meal times. They do stuff so! But my little old lady's glee was irresistible, and I inquired the expected visitor's age with an air of interest that was not altogether hypocritical.

"Nearly thirteen; and this 'chum' of his—as he calls him—Edric Tanqueray, is just a year older to the day. A nice little well-behaved fellow, too, or I shouldn't let Master Tommy bring him here! Ah, I'm very strict, Miss Alden, I assure you!" And Mrs. Perry smiled, and twinkled, and nodded, and screwed up her neat little toothless mouth in a manner intended to impress me with an adequate idea of the vigour of her administration, and the exclusiveness of her views.

"Edric!" I repeated. "It is a rather uncommon name."

"Yes, indeed!" agreed Mrs. Perry. "I don't hold with those high-flown, new-fangled, uncomfortable sort of names. They don't sound homely. Mine—and I christened eleven, my dear—were all Toms and Dicks and Harrys and Georges, and the girls, Mary, and Bessie, and Susie, and Kate. But this boy is a nice, biddable little fellow, for all his outlandish name."

"I like it," I said. "He is a school-fellow of your grandson, did you say?"

"Yes; and an orphan, poor little laddie. What relatives he has—and I don't fancy they are very fond of him—are out in Australia, so it is a real kindness to have him here with Tommy once in a way. Ah, there they are!" as a shuffle of feet and a sound of suppressed giggling on the doorstep, which I had been noticing for two or three minutes, culminated in a heavy but irregular attack upon the knocker. "I hope Ann has put plenty of jam in the roley!"

Enter, in due course, Tommy Perry, rosy, sandy, and freckled, and Edric Tanqueray, slim, straight, and olive-cheeked, with well-opened frank brown eyes under straight dark brows, and waving dark brown hair. My heart gave quite a jump when I saw him—those eyes and that hair were of precisely the same type as Mary's. This young Edric was a handsome boy, and my interest in him was keenly awakened from the moment he came into the room.

Both lads seemed shy and uncomfortable at first, no doubt owing to the presence of a stranger. Tommy replied to his grandmother's genial remarks with a propriety and politeness which in one of his age and sex were positively appalling; Edric said as little as possible; and the boys filled up awkward pauses in the conversation with a mutual interchange of silent grins, that might have conveyed volumes, though they probably meant nothing, but which, in the absence of interpretation, were decidedly aggravating.

The appearance of dinner seemed to set the visitors somewhat at ease, and they grew more communicative.

"You are not going back to Australia yet?" observed Mrs. Perry, turning her twinkling spectacles upon Edric in a beaming interrogation.

"Not yet, ma'am, I hope," he replied.

"Nor yet out to business, either!" added Tommy, with his mouth full of pudding.

"No," said Edric. "Thanks to Aunt Kathleen."

"She's a stunner, ain't she?" remarked Tommy, sympathetically.

"Rather," was the other boy's expressive rejoinder.

"She's awful fun to go out with," continued Tom, whose tongue seemed fast yielding to the lubricating influence of "jam roley." "Don't you remember that day she took us both to Epping Forest? Didn't we have larks? She's as good as another fellow to go out with, better than lots."

Edric smiled and nodded in evident gratification, and Mrs. Perry and I exchanged a few remarks upon another subject.

In the next pause, however, Tommy resumed—apparently with the desire of airing his friend's "stunning" relative before me, and himself sharing the reflected glory. "Doesn't your Aunt Kathleen ride splendidly? I reckon she could ride a Wild West buck-jumper if she liked, just as well as a cow-boy, couldn't she?"

Edric's face clouded. "She used to be able to ride anything," he said, gravely. "But perhaps she never will again."

"Why not?" asked Tommy, with round eyes.

"She's very ill. She got hurt not long ago, stopping a runaway horse," replied Edric, and I held my breath to hear more. "She got better after that, and I suppose she thought she was quite well. But she has been dreadfully bad again since then, worse than she was at first. They won't let me see her, but the friend she is staying with told me she thought she did it lifting something too heavy one day. But wasn't it fine of her to stop the horse?"

"Would you mind telling me your aunt's name?" I asked, and the room seemed to be going round in the second or two that I waited for his reply.

"Miss Tanqueray—Kathleen Mary Tanqueray," the boy answered. "Do you think you know her?"

"I'm not quite sure," I replied. But I *was*—in my own heart! I knew I was at last on the right track for solving the mystery of "K. M. T."

CHAPTER XII.

CLEAR AS THE NOONDAY.

HOW I contained myself during the remainder of that day at Mrs. Perry's, I really don't know. I longed to fly off home at once and tell Keith the good news of my wonderful discovery. For good it was to me.

In the first place, I felt certain that Kathleen Tanqueray and our Mary Ray were one and the same person, and though I was necessarily grieved to hear of her illness, it explained her silence in the most satisfactory manner; and of her ultimate recovery and complete reconciliation to us all, I, with the sanguine hopefulness of youth, entertained not the slightest doubt. Then how important was the fact of the existence of another Edric! All our torturing doubts and difficulties seemed on the verge of melting away like the shadows of night before the first golden rays of a cloudless dawn.

All the afternoon, while the boys played in the garden, and I read the newspaper to Mrs. Perry, was my mind occupied with schemes for making quite sure before losing my opportunity that my suspicions were well founded. Everyone knows that it is quite possible to read aloud without having the remotest idea of the meaning of the words that pass over the tongue, but of *how* one reads under such circumstances, certainly the less said the better. But my employer, bless her dear contented heart, seemed perfectly satisfied. I wanted to secure some item of indubitable evidence for the satisfaction of those at home, without betraying to young Edric an episode of his aunt's recent career of which he might probably be ignorant.

At last I hit upon my question.

"I fancy I do know your Aunt Kathleen," I remarked to the boy, getting him in a quiet corner after tea out of earshot of Master Tommy. "Is she acquainted with a Mrs. Jonesmith—the Honourable Mrs. Jonesmith?"

"Oh, yes, quite well!" answered the boy, with that bright frank look which had reminded me so strangely of our Mary at first sight. "They came over from Australia in the same ship. They are very great friends."

"Then it *is* the same!" I said. "Your aunt Kathleen is a great friend of mine, too, Edric, only we—that is—I have lost sight of her lately."

"You knew her in Melbourne, I suppose?" he said.

"No," I replied cautiously—"in England. I am very sorry to hear that she is ill. I hope she is better. I should like to go and see her, if you would give me her address."

"She is staying with Mrs. Browne, No. 12, Lausanne Gardens," Edric told me readily. "She is a little better, but I'm not sure whether she may see anybody yet."

How I hoped my brother would have returned from his Saturday afternoon cricketing before I reached home that evening! I was impatient for Edith to know, but somehow I did want to tell him first.

It is not often that things fall out exactly as we want in this world, but on this occasion I was thus favoured, for Keith opened the door.

"I've found her—I've found Mary!" I gasped. "And she *isn't* unkind, Keith—she's very ill. But she is getting better. And I've found her Edric—*her* Edric, Edie!"—as my sister, attracted by my excited tones, appeared at the parlour door—"and, just think! he's a *little boy!*"

Of course, all this required much more explanation than I was in a position to give, Edith in particular being far less satisfied and delighted than I had expected. Many were the "But whys?" and "But whats?" with which I was assailed, until I grew quite tired of answering, "I don't know." But the upshot of all our discussion was a letter written by me, with a postscript from Keith, addressed to "Dearest Mary," but boldly directed to "Miss Tanqueray, care of Mrs. Browne," which was posted that same night.

Carefully we—that is, Keith and I, for what Edith's feelings were, she did not choose to reveal—calculated how soon we might, all things considered, reasonably look for a reply, and to save ourselves disappointment we fixed the time as far off as Tuesday night or Wednesday morning. But it came on Monday night—not, indeed, from Mary herself, but from Mrs. Browne in her name, requesting me to go and see the invalid next day.

Joyfully I explained matters to Mrs. Perry, obtained a half holiday, and went, bearing an exquisite bunch of roses as an offering from Keith.

I found Mary in bed and looking worse than she had

done at any time during her illness in our house, but she greeted me with a comical, self-deprecatory smile. "My sin has found me out, you see," she said.

"*We* have found you out," I answered, kissing her. "And very, very glad we are. Darling Mary, it made us all so unhappy that you should leave us like that."

"I have paid pretty dearly for it—for my temper, I mean," she answered. "I was in such a rage I don't think I knew what I was doing. I acted like a brute to you, poor dear little Sissie! But it was dragging that old box of mine downstairs that did for me. I've been going the round of everything horrible that ends in *itis* ever since, and I'm not out of the wood yet."

"You must not talk," I said, conventionally.

"Yes, I must," promptly rejoined the invalid, with a flash of her old self. "And you must sit just there and listen to me."

"Keith sent you these, with his love," I said, seating myself obediently, and laying the flowers on the bed.

Mary's alabaster cheeks flushed as red as any rose among them. "I don't deserve it," she said. "I've been making up penitent letters to all of you every minute I was able to think ever since I've been lying here."

"I think Edith sees that she was over-hasty," I said.

"No, she wasn't," Mary contradicted. "She was quite justified in all she said, only it made me angry to find myself doubted. Of course, that unlucky letter that I began and threw away was to my young nephew. But I had been corresponding with Edric Moore too, though it was all about the boy. I never thought what a scrape my secret might get me into—and other people too. It was such a joke! You see, I'm an only daughter, and I've always had all my own way; so when I wanted to come over to England with Mrs. Jonesmith, and study English middle-class life to help me with a book I'm going to write, nobody said 'nay.' Soon after I got here—about a year ago—there was a great bank smash, you remember it, I daresay"—indeed, I did, only too well!—"and my father lost a great deal. One result of this was that he said that Edric, who is an orphan, and dependent upon us, must leave school at once (he was at a boarding-school near London) and go into a situation. The poor boy was *so* disappointed, for he had set his heart on winning a certain scholarship. He's a dear little fellow, and I'm tremendously fond of him, and I struck an idea. I said, 'If father really can't afford the expense of his schooling, I will. I'll take a situation and *earn* the money, and if it isn't enough, I'll be very economical, and make up the rest out of my allowance.'"

"Oh, Mary," I exclaimed, "how good of you!"

"The idea seemed to promise good fun," confessed Mary, "that's why I liked it. I knew I was capable of general domestic work, for I had insisted on trying my hand at everything when I was at home. So I came to you, and—forgive me!—I very soon saw how things stood. But the greatest joke of all was my encounter with Edric Moore! Why, Sissie, he was my brother's dearest friend, and young Edric had been named after him. I shall never forget the moment of mutual recognition! He had no idea I was in England. However, I got hold of him and pledged him to secrecy or death! Hence most of the ensuing hash! However, he had some influence with the principal of Eddie's school, and was able to come to some arrangement by which the boy was to stay on almost for nothing, and my help was not so much needed. But by that time I had grown to care a good deal for some of you, and I was so sorry for your difficulties, and you seemed such a set of poor helpless children. By the way," she suddenly broke off, "how have you all been getting on lately?"

"Shockingly!" I replied, with emphasis. "We have had to sell some of our furniture and things to keep out of debt. How *did* you manage so well when you were with us? Oh, Mary!" as a light suddenly broke upon me, "you didn't—you didn't——"

Mary turned red again, and pulled up the sheet over her face.

"I think you had better go now!" came the muffled command. "I have talked a great deal more than I ought, already. Tell Keith he shall come and forgive me the moment I get downstairs."

* * * * *

My story is ended—at least, my readers can guess the rest of it just as well as I can tell them. Of course, Mary, or Kathleen, as we are trying to get into the way of calling her, speedily recovered, and as her father was able, notwithstanding his losses, to settle a nice little income upon her, she and Keith were married without delay.

Edric and Edith were united shortly after, and father lives part of his time with them, and the rest with Kathleen and Keith. Young Edric makes his home with the latter pair also. My dear old lady is still living (she will be eighty-five, she frequently tells me, on the next anniversary of Waterloo), and the number of her grandchildren has increased to thirty-seven. I live with her, for her former companion became engaged during that six weeks' holiday, and came back to her for only a short time.

We are all supremely content, and often talk and laugh—though with an undercurrent of deep thankfulness—over our troublous experiences with "Mary Ray."

THE END.

*** *Our next number will contain the opening chapters of a delightful* NEW SERIAL STORY *entitled* "A STRING OF PEARLS," *by* ELIZA F. POLLARD, *beautifully illustrated by* VICTOR VENNER.

Early Promises.—It is recorded of Cassandane, wife of Cyrus, that her royal rights were ignored and her dignity wounded by Egyptian influence. One day she strongly expressed her vexation in the hearing of Cambyses, the eldest of her sons. "Mother," exclaimed the boy, "when I am a man I will turn Egypt upside down for you." He was but ten years old, but he never forgot his resolution; and when he became a man, and mounted the throne, he commenced an expedition against Egypt. Tradition also traces the origin of Hannibal's wars against the Romans to a vow which his father, Hamilcar, bound upon him when nine years old.

* * * *

Do not complain of a child's conduct before a stranger, or scold him in the presence of a third person. Never hold him up to ridicule before others; and if he has any personal defect, never draw attention to it in his hearing. If it is necessary for you to take a child to the doctor, leave it with a nurse in another room while you explain all the symptoms.

The Breadwinner. (*From a painting by* RALPH HEDLEY.)

FAMILY OVERPLUSSES.

BY THE REV. CHARLES COURTENAY, M.A., AUTHOR OF "HOME FRICTION," ETC.

THERE is not much comfort to be got out of an untidy home. No doubt, one may get used even to dirt and disorder, and by dint of not being too particular, and taking things as they come, may scrape along in such a domestic pig-sty. But comfort in such a place no one can have. The mere wear and tear of being unable to find things must be a daily distress; while the sight of draggled people, and dusty things, and the presence of musty smells cannot but be, even to those who are the least particular, a constant offence.

But while I have not a good word for such domestic dust-bins, and would disestablish them all to-morrow if I could, I have not very much good to say of those violent extremes which I have ventured to call in the heading of this little paper "Family Overplusses." Man is a creature of extremes, as everybody knows, so that it would not be quite a natural thing if there were not domestic extremes too. And it will be the aim of this paper to tilt against a few of them. I am afraid I have not set myself an easy task, but then I remember that no reforms ever have been easy, and yet many have been passed and carried out. And so I go forth on my crusade against "Family Overplusses"—full of hope that folks will be sensible enough to remedy any defects that I may succeed in pointing out.

What a disease, for instance, *cleanliness* may become, and has become, in some houses! There are homes where you might eat off the floor. See the pride mantling the face of the good housewife who has made the establishment such a spick and span one. She is proud of her clean house. But see her again when some heedless soul has made his mark on that spotless floor! Ponder the sudden influx of blood to the head! Mark the rush of temper to the spirit and to the tongue! Now, it is evident that cleanliness is more important than sweetness of temper to our friend. This is what I call a "Family Overplus."

I well remember overhearing the bitter complaint of a married man about this vice of over-cleanliness. It seemed that his good lady had a drawing-room of spotless purity. It was the best room, and therefore the cherished room. It was not to be used for common purposes—oh, dear no! It was sacred to company, and until the company came was to be safely locked. It was the complaint of our grumbling friend that if he ever ventured to set foot in that clean and sacred chamber he was immediately hounded out with the most abusive terms hurled at his devoted head. "What is the good of having a room if you don't use it?" he asked indignantly. Now, I have always understood that the great object of cleanliness is to add to people's comfort, not to their miseries, and if it spoils the peace of the home it is a decided overplus.

Order, too, is a great domestic virtue which everybody should cultivate. "A place for everything, and everything in its place." But order can be ridden to death just as easily as cleanliness. How many a poor husband has to endure unutterable woe because somebody with a craving for order will re-arrange his papers and put them neatly and scrupulously away! If the orderly persons who had taken such superhuman pains to tidy up had as good a memory as they had a love of order, disaster might have been averted. But this they never have.

"Oh, I put it quite safely away somewhere, but I can't think where."

Of course, it is always the most important papers which they have been at the most pains to hide away. And how extraordinary the misplaced ingenuity of this orderly person! Now, it seems to me that persons with this inordinate love of order ought to be kept safely out of harm's way, and that such a family overplus should be made an indictable offence. For think of the waste of time it occasions, the tempers it generates, the losses it produces! So I presume I may put this overgrown love of order among the family overplusses which we would gladly spare.

Punctuality, too, is another virtue which may easily be overdone. Remember, I am not arguing against punctuality in the main, for it is not only an excellent thing, but a necessary thing in the home. There is no more fruitful source of loss and misery than the want of punctuality. But there is a limit to all things, and a moderation which is still more excellent. It is a pity, for instance, to suffer all the agony of pins and needles when the dinner is not on the table at the stroke of the hour. It is a pity also when the electric clouds discharge themselves on the one-minute-late inmate. A little allowance should be made for the variation of clocks and watches in this most imperfect world. We do not want the system of the military martinet introduced into our homes, and the administration of the lash to follow deviations from the rule. To sacrifice all the milk of human kindness, and to turn it all sour because of some minute degree of lateness, is to put second things first, and to elevate rules above principles. It is better to be quiet than to be in time even. It is better to be kind and gentle than to be early. Punctuality is not one of the highest virtues, and must not be made to take the place of one. In workshops the matter is different, for nobody can run a workshop on domestic lines, or on any other line, in fact, than a business one, workmen having often to be paid by the hour.

Of course, in the domestic circle it behoves every right-minded person to aim at rigid punctuality, and to be sorry for every breach of it. But if there be a slight fracture, let all possible allowances be made and let the matter have only its proper share of blame attached to it. It is the overplus which we ought to guard against—the love of punctuality and nothing else. Like the love of cleanliness and the love of order, the love of punctuality should be softened and cushioned by the law of charity and gentle latitude. The home is not a factory, and never should be turned into one.

Discipline, too, may be carried to extremes, and be overdone. I do not think that this is the general tendency of the day in English homes. We are rather

in danger of relaxing all the strictness of olden days. And if I were writing an article on the other side, I could say much on the weakness and want of discipline here and there. But I must keep to my text.

Surely, discipline is carried too far when children are afraid of their parents and tremble at their approach. The discipline which crushes the heart out of the child can surely find no apologists. And yet there are homes where this result has been achieved, and where law is so paramount that love has no room to breathe. More painful and distressing homes it would be difficult to find than such.

The discipline, too, which checks confidences and confessions cannot be good either. The certain punishment which follows even a confessed fault is not a likely way to induce confessions. It is far more likely to induce deceit and lying.

And is not discipline which punishes equally minor and major faults a species of injustice which ought not to be? Yet such discipline exists too frequently in many homes. Children have a keen sense of justice, and are endowed with far more penetration than they are given credit for possessing. So that to violate their sense of justice by an immoderate punishment will do them an immeasurable injury.

The ideal which should, I think, be aimed at in the home should be that happy blending of justice and love which shines out so gloriously in God's dealings with ourselves. Mingle your stern laws with your gentle love, your corrections with your heart's tenderness, and discipline shall not lose but gain in efficacy by the blend.

Let us beware of the overplus of sternness and punishment, for to err here is to defeat our own purpose.

Shall I be carrying my protests too far if I speak against the overplus of *religious pressure?* I must walk warily here for fear of being misunderstood. But I do think that there is sometimes a danger of carrying religious teaching to a dangerous extreme.

From conversations I have had with many irreligious sons of religious parents I have learnt that it is possible to disgust children with the very name of religion by serving it up too plentifully and too often. To drag it in on all occasions; to waylay the children at every corner with a text; to be for ever probing their hearts to see how they are prospering in a religious way; to drench them with religious advice from morning till night; to be ever marching them off to this meeting and that; to bring in religious friends to attack their supposed unregeneracy and appeal to their fears; to put them under glass cases lest the unkindly air of the world should blow too strongly upon their delicate souls; to do all these things, well meant though they are, is to err, I am persuaded, on the side of excess and overplus.

May not this be the reason of that oft-asked question, "Why do the children of godly parents turn out so badly?" As a matter of fact, they do not as a rule turn out badly. But it is an undoubted fact that some do, and we cannot deny it. One may surfeit children so much with religion—and religion, be it remembered, for which they have no natural liking—that when they have their liberty, and can please themselves, they will choose its very opposite, a loose and irreligious life.

The truth is, that it is not the large doses which are administered to our children, nor the pressure of authority which is so constantly brought to bear on them, which bring them to the feet of Christ, but the imperceptible influence of the home atmosphere, and the Christian spirit which accompanies the quiet, unobtrusive teaching of God's truths. We cannot compel children to be religious; we can only win them to the Saviour by His Spirit working in us.

I do not, however, think that we should be surprised at these frailties in the home, for are we not all of us frail creatures on one side or another? So long as the world and human nature are so imperfect, so long will the family have its defects and overplusses. Yea, we may expect that in the home, where we are to be found just as we are, with all our disguises off, our failings and want of balance will be still more fully emphasised.

Now, the great problem is *how overplusses may be cut down and remedied.* Let me conclude with an attempted answer.

First of all, we must *recognise them.* Let us study our natures and see where our weak points lie. If we find that a difficult matter, as I am afraid we shall, then let us open our ears to the revelations of the candid friend. There are a good many of them about, and we need not go far to look for them. They will, of course, exaggerate our frailties; but we must not mind that. The road to self-knowledge always has been a rough and painful one. Critics never keep to the strict truth, so we must take a little off from their candid remarks.

Then, having recognised our faults, our overplusses, let us *resolve to face and deal with them.* It will not be an easy work nor a quick one. But it can be accomplished. We must watch tendencies, and check them moment by moment. The constant trimming and paring down of overplusses will sooner or later make them of quite a respectable appearance.

But this will not enable us to make much headway unless we *bring in One stronger than ourselves.* Religion is needed here—and a good deal of it. There must be divine shaping, if we want our overplusses to be much reduced or, better still, to be removed altogether. Thank God! all things are easy with Him. And, as we pray and trust, we may be sure that it will not be in vain. We shall emerge from such exercises well-balanced and well-proportioned Christians. May God hasten the day!

A Kind Word.—A poor German woman sat with her children in the waiting-room of an American station. A lady, struck by her look of misery, stopped to speak with her. The story was soon told. Her husband had been buried at sea. She was going to Iowa, "and it was hard to enter a strange place alone." The stranger had but a minute to spare. She pressed a little money into the poor creature's hand, and said, "Alone! Why, Jesus is with you! He never will leave you alone!' Ten years afterwards, on recounting this act of kindness to her in sore need, the woman said, "That word kept me happy through all troubles."—*Dr. Cuyler.*

* * * *

It is the Children we want; they are the mainspring of life, the coming men and women of England. Teach them right from wrong; make them feel their responsibility, they will never forget it. God's truths strike deep—though they may lie buried for years.—*Marchioness of Stafford.*

OSTRICH FARMS AND FEATHERS.

BY CONSTANCE L. WATSON.

A Nesting Pair.

FEW articles for our personal adornment can excel in real beauty ostrich feathers. Their delicate texture, their gracefulness of shape, their "superior" look, so to say, mark them out as adjuncts to dress "much to be desired." Indeed, for centuries ostrich feathers have held their place side by side with gold and precious stones in the dress of Royal Courts; and at our own English Drawing Rooms at St. James's Palace to-day these lovely plumes can be seen in perfection. But there is no need for me to praise ostrich feathers as aids to elegant dressing. Every woman of taste will agree as to their help in that direction. What I wish to do here is to chat for a few minutes on the way in which these charming articles are procured for our use.

If the average woman were asked whence ostrich feathers are obtained, she would probably reply, "Oh, let me see. The ostrich is a big bird that runs wild in Africa, and the natives hunt it for its feathers, which are sent to England and sold in the shops." Now, such a reply is far from strict accuracy. As a matter of fact, vast numbers of ostriches are bred and farmed for their feathers very much like, say, sheep are reared in England for their wool. This ostrich farming is carried on in South Africa, and the whole occupation and its surroundings are both novel and interesting, as a peep at any ordinary ostrich farm in Cape Colony will very clearly make apparent.

Let us imagine that we have arrived at such a homestead as may be seen in our second picture. It is a square, red-brick building, very inviting as a relief to the blinding glare of a tropical sun. On one side of the house are the work and waggon sheds, with the vegetable garden and lands, the "camp" being farther away. In this camp the ostriches are kept, and very curious birds they are in a domesticated state. A well-fenced and secure inclosure is a luxury in the colony, and is only to be met with on the wealthier farms, the owners of which can afford to keep them in repair, and to stock them with the more expensive kinds of birds. But every ostrich farmer has a camp of some kind, large or small, according to his means, and in it he keeps his 300 or 500 birds. The best piece of grazing ground on the farm is always used for the camp, and here the birds remain year in and year out.

As is well known, an ostrich in its wild state is terribly afraid of man or of any unfamiliar sight, and flies at the appearance of anything new to its ken. When domesticated, however, it becomes docile, and after a time even assumes a position of authority and becomes master of the situation. From June up to September, or, in fact, till Christmas, thousands of chicks are reared every year, and thousands meet with death every year from some form of accident. Chicks up to twelve months old die from various maladies, but

On an Ostrich Farm.

A Game Bird.

seldom after they are full-grown are they the victims of any sickness, death usually resulting from a broken leg, from fighting, or from scarcity of food in times of drought.

There is an old idea that the female ostrich leaves her eggs in the sand to be hatched out in the sun. This, however, is a fallacy. The male and female sit alternately for forty-four days—the male at night and the female during the day-time. The nest of an ostrich is a very crude affair, consisting simply of a round hole in the ground. Sometimes the female bird may be seen scratching the earth preparatory to laying her first egg; but this is not often the case, the hollow generally being made by the continuous sitting of the birds on the one spot. A pair of birds will produce from ten to twenty eggs; but it often happens that three or four birds will lay in one nest, thus bringing the number of eggs up to seventy or more. Of course, the superfluous eggs have to be taken away, as a bird cannot cover comfortably more than sixteen eggs, all over this number being thrown on one side and left to decay.

When a nest is hatched the family are taken out of the camp, and brought to the homestead to be tamed. Here they are tended by the farm hands, and are housed at night out of the reach of wild animals. During the summer months they will do well, but in winter, when food becomes scarce, they must be fed morning and evening on barley or rape.

The female bird is seldom vicious, but when she has a brood of young chicks the onlooker must be prepared to defend himself against her attacks. Far more formidable is the male ostrich at this time. He becomes quite savage, and his note of defiance, which somewhat resembles the roar of a lion, can be heard night and day. If you approach too near, he will rush at you with flashing eyes, looking the very embodiment of fury.

Once every four months the ostriches are collected and brought together for the purpose of plucking their feathers. This is always a great day on the farm. Orders are given over-night to the Kaffirs and Hottentot "hands" to get ready and saddled every available riding horse. This is done before sunrise next morning, and the mounted men, including the master himself, start off in different directions to drive together the birds from the remote spots to which they may have wandered. When huddled together in a "kraal" they become as meek as lambs, and a bag or stocking is placed over the head and neck of each bird in turn, while two experienced workers strip the feathers. If the clipping takes place in June, it is the prime feathers that are taken. These are the long white ones, numbering from eighteen to

Driving Home the Stragglers.

Clipping the Feathers.

twenty in each wing, eight or nine fancy feathers, and a few long black ones, all taken at the same time. Four months later the stumps of these feathers are drawn, and two months later again—that is, six months after the "primes"—the short black and tail feathers are taken. As a rule, as many feathers as possible are plucked without inflicting pain on the bird, and, at the same time, enough are left to keep out the cold.

The feathers are afterwards carefully sorted according to length and quality, and tied into small bunches. They are then packed and forwarded to the nearest market, unless a feather buyer has bought the plucking beforehand.

Of course, careful cleaning, dressing, and curling follow, until finally the feathers are fit for the milliner, and by-and-by are found adorning an aristocratic head or gracing the hats and bonnets of humbler folk.

THE MASTER'S MESSAGES TO WOMEN.

BY CHARLOTTE SKINNER, AUTHOR OF "MY HAPPY POSSESSIONS," ETC., ETC.

TO THE SINFUL WOMAN.

HAVE you ever counted up the number of times we read of our Lord eating with people? There are at least *eight*. Do you not think the fact of His meeting so familiarly with the people draws Him closer to us, and we can realise how much He is as one of us? When any wished to talk to Him, there was no need to wait till some lonely spot or temple court was reached, but even while He was eating they could come and whisper their wants to Him.

Sometimes He stayed in a humble home, where the mistress did all her own work, and sometimes where hired servants were kept. He was one day in the house of a man who had money but not manners, when a woman came silently and timidly in at the open door, and went at once to where the Master was sitting.

"Who is she?" whispered the other guests.

"Bah!" sneered mine host, "I know her, and the least said about her the better."

Who was she? Well, strange to say, her story all turns on that little word,

"MUCH."

Much Sin. "A sinner." We all know what that means—a child of the night. But she had been an innocent child once, perhaps betrayed by some heartless man, maybe by this host himself, as he seemed to know so much about her; and then because no one believed in her, and everybody shunned her, saying she was ruined for life, she had sunk deeper still in sin.

Her sin was such that it could not be committed alone, yet the world brands the one sinner and lets the other partner in guilt go free. But does God act in that manner? *Nay*, and if English law fails to track the man, God does not.

We think of such women as great sinners, yet perhaps they fell in a moment of great temptation or excitement. And what about ourselves? Why, some of us have calmly and deliberately stained a woman's reputation, cherished an impure thought, stabbed another with cruel words, influenced our children for evil by our example for all time, charged God by our doubts with being unkind, unjust—all these, and yet we seem to think our sin not so great as hers! God forgive us!

Much Sorrow. She had heard of Christ—His wonderful tenderness even to such as she; she had even, perhaps, seen and talked to Him before; and she decides to come and ask for forgiveness. And as she looks into His face, sees there all the wonderful compassion, realises her blackness through the contrast with His purity, she sinks at His feet in an agony of grief, and her tears rain down the pale face on to His sandalled feet. But even her tears she does not deem worthy to touch Him, and hastily wipes them away with her long hair which had come unbound. Thus, she makes confession of her guilt, though not a word escapes her trembling lips.

Many of us think we are quite good enough, do not realise how stained we are. But if we follow in the footsteps of this woman, come to His feet, contrast our life with His, surely our hearts will be overwhelmed within us!

Much Criticism. "Fancy that woman coming here!" "Mind! do not let her touch you!" "That's all done for effect—pretty good actress, isn't she?" "If He were a prophet He would know very well she is a piece of city-scum." Such might have been the remarks that she would have heard, had she heeded. But she had not come to listen to them; she had come to see Christ, and doubtless lost sight of everybody in the room but Him. The amount of criticising done in the world is tremendous—enough brain power expended in it to govern a nation. How it weakens the arm of the Christian worker, taking the joy out of the work, hindering the advance of the Kingdom, killing love!

Do not heed these criticisms. Let them not mar your work, nor your life. Think only of pleasing the Master.

"The Master praises! What are men?"

Much Faith. It must have needed a good bit of bravery to have enabled her to face all that company! And what was it that led her to come? *Faith*—nothing but that. She just said to herself, "I am wretched and vile, but if He will forgive me, I can once more have hope. He has forgiven others, and I have heard He said, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest.' I'll take Him at His word." And when Christ saw her, He recognised her faith—praised her for it. The Master loves to be trusted. Does He see the same faith in you and me?

Much Forgiven. Listen! The guests have ceased their chatter; only the musical splash of the fountain in the courtyard garden is heard, and on the quietness falls the silvery voice—the voice that first woke the echo of the hills—and we catch the "message" which changed a crushed earth-stained flower into a blossom fit for Eden: "*Thy sins are forgiven.*" She knelt in tears, but after that message, rose with smiles.

"And will He forgive me?" Certainly. Is it not written, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive"?

Not one word of recrimination did the Master utter; there was no sting in the message, and nothing to intimate from what a low depth He had raised her. Do we forgive like that?

Much Love. How could she help loving Him? See what He had done for her! Instead of spurning her as Simon, the host, wanted Him to do, He had extolled her at Simon's expense! Simon had seen only the shadow upon her life; Christ saw the sunlight, and spoke of it. And the fact of forgiveness alone was enough to make her love Him. It was love that had won her love. The shepherd casts aside the broken reed as valueless, but the divine Shepherd takes it, and with His gentle fingers fashions it again into grace and strength, and brings wondrous music out of it. The housewife, when she has a smoky, smouldering wick, quickly takes it out of doors, glad to rid the house of its offensive odour, and with her foot soon extinguishes it; but He who "knoweth our frame" and bore our sorrows, takes the smoking flax and fans it into a clear, beautiful flame, which gives light to all around. And the reed says, "I'll sing for Him who made me strong;" and the flame says, "I'll shine for Him who gave me my brightness." And the saved soul sings,

> "I love Him, and I love Him, and I love,
> Oh heart, my love goes welling o'er the brim,
> Oh heart, thou art too small for love so strong,
> Oh heart, grow large, grow deeper for His sake."

Much Peace. The message was not yet ended. "Go," said the Master. "Go"? Where? To cloistered home, or wilderness retreat? "Go, *in peace.*" And with sunlight on her face and music in her heart, she left the house of the Pharisee, to go, if she chose, into the busy city amid all who knew her, where every day she might hear the jeering word and see the mocking finger—aye, into the very streets where shame had met her, where still the wanton eye might look at her, and the serpent's voice hiss in her ears; for the white wings were over her.

"Ruined for life," her relatives had said. "Saved for eternity," said Christ. Once filled with shame was she, now filled with hope.

Does not the story put hope into all our hearts, however low we may have fallen? does it not teach us how to win the fallen? and does it not warn us against dooming any to life-long despair? Who of us dare say, in the face of all the gracious tenderness of this beautiful incident, that He who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" does not still welcome the outcast sister as lovingly as in days of old? True, this woman would still bear the scars of sin. But as the scarred rocks are covered in time, through our Father's sunlight and showers, with lovely ferns and mosses, so to the sin-scarred come healing and beauty through grace and hope.

"In peace" would ever be the burden of her song as she loyally cleaved to the Master.

"In peace! with such a past?"

"In peace! with such a message!" would she reply.

*** These articles on "The Master's Messages" have now been published in book form; and the volume containing them can be obtained from Messrs. Partridge and Co., or from any bookseller. Price 1s.

HIS MOTHER MADE HIM.

A WEALTHY business man, not long ago, paid a short visit to his native town, a thriving little place, and while there was asked to address a Sunday School on the general subject of success in life.

"But I don't know that I have anything to say except that industry and honesty will win the race," he answered.

"Your very example would be inspiring, if you would tell the story of your life," said the superintendent. "Are you not a self-made man?"

"I don't know about that."

"Why, I've heard all about your early struggles. You went into Mr. Wilson's office when you were only ten——"

"So I did, so I did. But my mother got me the place, and while I was there she did all my washing and mending, saw that I had something to eat, and when I got discouraged, told me to cheer up and remember tears were for babies."

"While you were there you educated yourself——"

"Oh! no, not all. Mother heard my lessons every night, and made me spell long words while she did her work. I remember one night, I got so discouraged I dashed my writing-book, ugly with pothooks and hangers, in the fire, and she burned her hands in pulling it out."

"Well, it was certainly true, wasn't it, that as soon as you had saved a little money you bought some fruit and began to set up business at the railway station."

The rich man's eyes twinkled and then grew moist over the fun and pathos of some old recollections.

"Yes," he said, slowly; "and I should like to tell you a story connected with that time. Perhaps that might do the Sabbath School good. The second lot of apples that I bought for sale were specked and wormy. I had been cheated by the men of whom I had bought them, and I could not afford the loss. The night after I had discovered they were unfit to eat, I crept down to the cellar and filled my basket as usual.

"'They look very well on the outside,' I thought, 'and perhaps none of the people who buy them will ever come this way again. I'll sell them, and as soon as they are gone I'll get some sound ones.'

"Mother was singing about the kitchen as I came up the cellar stairs. I hoped to get out of the house without discussing the subject of unsound fruit, but in the twinkling of an eye she had seen and was upon me.

"'Ned,' she said in her clear voice, 'what are you going to do with those specked apples?'

"'Se—sell them,' stammered I, ashamed to advance.

"'Then you'll be a cheat, and I shall be ashamed to call you my son,' she said promptly. 'Oh! to think you could dream of such a sneaking thing as that.' Then she cried and I cried, and I've never been tempted to cheat since. No, sir, I haven't anything to say in

public about my early struggles, but I wish you'd remind your boys and girls, every Sabbath, that mothers are doing more for them than they do for themselves. I know the young people nowadays are inclined to look down upon the old folks at home as very much behind the times, forgetting that there are grander things than mere cleverness. Yet I'm certain that my dear old mother had some qualities of heart which far outshone any of the powers I may have possessed in climbing fortune's ladder. There! you have set my tongue going almost without my knowing it. However, one thing more—tell your scholars to pray that their mothers may live long enough to enjoy some of the prosperity they have won for their children, for mine didn't."

THE LITTLE LAD'S ANSWER.

OUR little lad came in one day
With dusty shoes and tired feet;
His play-time had been hard and long
Out in the summer's noontide heat.

"I'm glad I'm home!" he cried, and hung
His torn straw hat up in the hall,
While in a corner by the door
He put away his bat and ball.

"I wonder why," his auntie said,
"This little lad comes always here,
When there are many other homes
As nice as this and quite as near?"

He stood a moment deep in thought,
Then with the love-light in his eye
He pointed where his mother sat,
And said, "She lives here, that is why!"

With beaming face the mother heard;
Her mother-heart was very glad.
A true, sweet answer he had given,
That thoughtful, loving little lad.

And well I know that hosts of lads
Are just as loving, true, and dear;
That they would answer as he did:
"'Tis home, for mother's living here."

NOVEL NOTIONS.

A PORTABLE BALCONY.

WHEN one considers the terrible accidents which are chronicled now and again in the newspapers as the result of cleaning windows hard to get at, the invention of a safety balcony will be looked upon with pleasure. It would seem that builders have quite forgotten that the windows of the houses they have built would ever require cleaning, for provision, either inside or out, to do so is seldom seen. The portable balcony shown in our picture can be fixed or removed and folded up with ease by a single person in a minute or so, and will prove useful to many who live in tall houses. No fixtures in the window-frames are necessary to fasten it, and the apparatus does not injure the paint. All that is required to fix it to the window-sill are two wedges and two weights, which are supplied with the balcony.

CONSTANT TEMPERATURE.

To have our houses at a uniform temperature throughout the year is an ideal devoutly to be wished, but scarcely to be realised under ordinary conditions. A French hygienist, however, has lately been setting himself to the task of solving the problem, and with some show of success. He has built himself a villa embodying his ideas and experiments. The secret of its construction is an elaborate system of water-pipes forming the framework and supporting the wooden walls and floors. In summer cold water circulates through these pipes, and in the winter this water is heated to the desired temperature before it enters the pipes. The inventor recommends his method not only for private houses, but especially for public buildings and hospitals.

A SANITARY DUST-BIN.

During the summer months especially, no housewife can be too careful in guarding against bad smells about the dwelling. Not only are impure odours disagreeable in themselves, but there also lurk in their presence the germs of disease. Apology is therefore unnecessary in mentioning the disinfecting sanitary dustbin, for it is a novelty of which many householders will be glad to hear. The cover of this bin is so contrived that it may be removed bodily by the dustman when taking away the refuse, but for general household purposes a small hinged lid in the centre of the cover is employed. Beneath the lid is fixed a perforated box which contains a disinfectant, a small quantity of which is automatically scattered over the contents of the bin each time the lid is dropped after use.

*** Readers wishing for further information about the Portable Balcony illustrated above are invited to write to the Editor at 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C., enclosing a stamped envelope for reply.

WOMEN OF WORTH.

THE BARONESS BURDETT-COUTTS.

BY ISABEL SUART ROBSON.

FEW names are more closely identified with public and private benevolence than that of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, and any brief sketch of her life almost inevitably degenerates into a catalogue of numberless good works. The Prince of Wales once styled her "the second lady in the land after my mother," and this position she has reached by a rare combination of immense wealth and extraordinary business capacities, with open and intelligent generosity.

Angela Georgina Burdett was born in 1814, and was the youngest daughter of the celebrated Sir Francis Burdett, whose advocacy of reform won him the distinction of being the last person imprisoned in the Tower for political opinions, and from whom doubtless his daughter inherited her ardent sympathy with the oppressed and her keen sense of justice. In 1837 she inherited the immense wealth of her grandfather, Mr. Thomas Coutts, the banker, whose name she then assumed, and her wise and liberal use of this fortune has caused her name to become a household word wherever the English tongue is spoken.

Photo by] The Baroness Burdett-Coutts. *[Elliott & Fry.*

It is only possible to glance at a tithe of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts' philanthropic labours. She takes a special interest in all that concerns the welfare of her sex; at different times she has established sewing schools in various parts of London, with a view to teaching girls to be self-supporting, and she was almost the first to start in England a reformatory on broad and simple lines. She has always been an earnest supporter of the Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and to Animals, and in the East End the improved condition of the costers' donkeys testifies to her practical work for those humble servants of man.

Emigration has always had a steady adherent in the Baroness, and she has on various occasions assisted hundreds of poor East End weavers to go to the colonies, where their craft ensured them a decent living. She lent on one occasion, as passage money, over a thousand pounds, and it is one of her pleasures to recall the fact that nearly all this money has been faithfully repaid.

The housing of the poor has always occupied much of her attention, and owing to her efforts many open spaces were provided for crowded towns long before sanitary reformers admitted their value. Some years ago one of the plague spots of London was a certain waste in Bethnal Green, known as Nova Scotia Gardens, a thieves' and murderers' sanctuary, through which even the police were afraid to venture after dark. Miss Coutts, as she then was, bought the freehold, swept away the unwholesome hovels, and erected the model dwellings known as Columbia Square, which are let at low weekly rentals to about two hundred families. Close by was also built Columbia Market, founded to supply fish at a cheap rate to the poor. This has, however, been closed, and the buildings applied to another purpose.

Various schools and churches in the metropolis owe their erection to the Baroness's generosity, and she has also endowed the three colonial bishoprics of Adelaide, Cape Town, and British Columbia. Yet neither country, creed, nor sect limit her liberality. The case of the suffering Turks moved her in 1877 to institute the Turkish Compassionate Fund, by which £30,000 was raised and thousands were kept from starvation. As a mark of gratitude the Ottoman empire conferred upon its kind helper the Order of the Medjidieh, the only instance in which the decoration has been given to a woman. Six years previously Miss Coutts had been raised to the peerage, and in thus marking her appreciation of a subject who had done so much for her country the Queen did but express the universal feeling of English people everywhere.

One of the most beautiful deeds of the Baroness's long life has been her treatment of the starving fishing people of Skibbereen. Her interest had been with the peasantry of Ireland ever since the famine of 1848, and when, about twenty years ago, the late Father Davis wrote to her, representing the terrible condition of his parishioners, she at once responded with the offer of a loan of £10,000 and the establishment of a food and clothing store. The money, placed in the judicious hands of Father Davis, was loaned to the fishermen in sums of £150, the fishing boats, which brought them

their livelihood, being expensive necessaries. As a standing argument against Irish thriftlessness, it may be mentioned that not a penny of the money has been lost. When a few years ago the Baroness visited this district, raised by her generosity from destitution to comparative affluence, her coming was the occasion of enthusiastic rejoicings. Bonfires were lighted on the hill-tops, the villages on her route were decorated, and every sign of affection and gratitude shown.

It is needless to say that the Baroness is an indefatigable worker, for so many interests necessitate much labour. She is ably assisted by Mr. William Ashmead Bartlett, whom she married in 1882, and whose advice and sympathies are extended to every branch of her many philanthropic labours; but much still remains to be done personally. She answers much of her correspondence with her own hand, and visits frequently the charitable institutions in which she is interested, nor has she ever withdrawn from the social world. Her beautiful house in Stratton Street has for fifty years been the meeting-place of all who are distinguished in art, science, or literature; whilst Holly Lodge, Highgate, has seen many delightful country festivities and the largest garden party on record, when, in 1867, two thousand Belgian volunteers met the Prince and Princess of Wales and five hundred distinguished guests there. Happy days spent at Holly Lodge are among the fairest memories of thousands of pallid little city children, for it has never been the gentle hostess's habit "to keep her best for self."

A life long and full of service has been hers, and perhaps we need no stronger proof of the invincible power of goodness than the fact that one woman has indelibly impressed herself on the history of our country because she "has made her life one sweet record of deeds of charity."

MOTHERS IN COUNCIL.

CONDUCTED BY MRS. E. M. WATERWORTH, AUTHOR OF "MOTHERS AT HOME," ETC.

June 1st, 1896.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—How the time flies! It seems only a few weeks ago that we welcomed the New Year, and behold he has already half grown up; and careful mothers, while they are enjoying the long days of summer, will be making their plans for the long nights of winter. It is a splendid thing to teach the youngsters what my old grandmother used to call "forecasting," and to practise it yourself in everything. How angry it would make me, if I were a servant, to be called off in the middle of my work to fetch something which ought to have been ordered the day before! A good housekeeper thinks out the meals either the day before, or the first thing in the morning. A good mother prepares the children's thin clothing long before the hot weather comes, and works at winter garments while the sun still gives plenty of heat. I often think that although of course our Master intended His story of the ten virgins to teach us a lesson of heavenly thought and watchfulness, He also would like us to apply it to earthly matters. Read it through again, you busy and careful wives and mothers, and see if you do not agree.

So you see, "E. B.," that I was glad to send you the address for good wool, as a preventive of chilblains, and I hope that next winter you will suffer less.

* * * *

"AMY" wants my "opinions on friendship." It's rather like asking me to write a history of England on a sixpence, but I'll do my best in the smallest possible space. I consider that every man, woman, and child ought to have a real friend, and I will even go a step further, and say that I would never trust anybody, man, woman, or child, who was not capable of forming a friendship. I know of nothing more likely to draw out all that is good and noble, all that is self-denying and beautiful, in our much-abused human nature than a true friendship. Not one of the flimsy, backboneless sort of friendships, which consists in scattering one's conversation freely with endearing adjectives. People who prefer this have so-called "friends" by the score, and change them as often as Queen Elizabeth changed her dresses. No, I mean a very different thing. A friend who will be more to us than anyone in the world, and who, having been once admitted into our hearts, will stay there for ever. Such a friendship will halve our sorrows and double our joys.

* * * *

"MILLY" asks if I know a cure for affectation. I should say in your case it comes from nervousness. Try to forget yourself, dear, then you will be natural. Don't torment yourself with wondering how you look, or what people are *thinking* of you; be firm with yourself, as you would with a restive horse, and force yourself to notice what others are saying and doing. Fix your mind even on some item of some one's dress rather than keep it centered on your own poor nervous little self. After all, the people round you are probably not thinking about you at all.

* * * *

OUR PUZZLE PARAGRAPH.

"ALICE" has been engaged to a young man for two years, but she has known for twelve months that she does not really love him. The wedding is fixed for October. What ought she to do, marry him or not?

Answers should be addressed to me, at 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C., marked "Puzzle Paragraph," not later than the 15th inst. A Prize, consisting of a book, valued at half-a-crown, will be given to the writer of the best solution, which will be printed in these columns.

* * * *

It has been a most difficult task to settle the prize for the answer to "MARY'S" question in our March number, "How to keep our boys at home." All the papers were extremely good, but taking everything into consideration, I have awarded the prize to Mrs. Eleanor Douglas, Post Office, Close House, Bishop Auckland. Mrs. Street's answer is almost as good, and I have much pleasure in praising Mrs. Clarke, Mrs. Buck, Mrs. Kingdon, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Ladwell, and Mrs. Montgomery.

The prize answer is as follows :—

"I often think by a little thought, and perhaps a little sacrifice on the mother's side, many of our young men would spend their evenings at home who now seek enjoyment elsewhere. In the first place let us make home cheerful, a place of comfort and enjoyment; let us provide, so far as we can, harmless indoor games and amusements; let us sometimes put our work to one side and join them in a bit of fun; it pleases our sons to think mother interests herself in their pleasures. Let their companions have mother's smile and father's welcome when they bring them in for an hour's read or talk, we cannot expect them to be always content with their own company. If we do not welcome their friends, they will not come; then our boys will seek company elsewhere. Then, again, I do not think there is any young man but has a fad or fancy of his own. If it be harmless, encourage it; never mind a few scraps and dried leaves, or it may be shavings; have an old cover that can be spread over your table or floor (as the case may be) which he can remove in a few minutes. Some mothers may, perhaps, say, But then we never all know who may call, and we cannot do with the room upset. Mothers, think it over. Are our sons' company and comfort not more to us than a room always in apple-pie order, as the old saying goes, ready to receive visitors? I remember one of my brothers used to keep his fretwork machine in his bedroom; mother used to say it did no harm, and a little dust was soon cleared away. A friend of mine has grown-up sons; she lets them have the kitchen to themselves every Friday night; they have quite a good number of young men come for Bible reading. If we want to keep them at home it cannot be done without thought, so let us all think and try what we can do for their comfort.—Yours, A MOTHER OF FOUR BOYS."

* * * *

Here is the simple head wash that "JOSEPHINE" asked for. Get twopennyworth of salts of tartar, and put it in a glass bottle which will hold a pint and a half of liquid. Fill the bottle with SOFT water, and do not put a cork in for half an hour. After that, the mixture will be ready for use. When you are going to use it, pour a little into a saucer and add water to it. Rub it into the head with your hands, when it will lather like soap. Be careful to wash the head with clear water afterwards, so that you get all the hairwash out.

* * * *

I hope my friends at Barrow found that their thoughtful present to the minister was appreciated. "The labourer is worthy of his hire," and he loves also to have a few extra bits of gratitude and kindness thrown in. If congregations would only remember this more, and show their appreciation of the men who labour for their souls by little acts and words of kindness, we should not have so many of the Lord's messengers fainting because of the way.

N.B.—Thoughtful mothers will kindly apply this teaching to the home life—two words of praise are worth a ton of blame sometimes.

* * * *

My dear "WINNIE," I am afraid you have been hoaxing me. I wrote a letter to you at the address in Jersey you gave me, and it has been returned through the Dead Letter Office. I quite agree with you in your admiration for Mr. Tom Hughes. He was born at Uffington, Berks, on 20th October, 1823, and died at Brighton on the 22nd of last March.

* * * *

"JUDY" is a martyr to indigestion, and writes to me for a dietary. After a fairly long and very chequered existence, and a careful watching of other people's affairs as well as my own, I have come to the conclusion that indigestion is at the root of a good deal of the evil of the world, so I gladly repeat the dietary.

Avoid all sugary and starchy things, however much you may like them. Eat fish, boiled or baked, not fried; mutton, chicken, or game, green vegetables such as spinach, sea-kale, asparagus, carefully made rice-pudding, batter-pudding, or custard, or fruit stewed without sugar. Avoid beef, salted meats of all kinds; new bread, sweet sauces, and rich puddings. Drink cocoa made from cocoa-nibs, or tea made with boiling milk instead of water, and allowed to stand not longer than four minutes on the leaves, and take regular exercise every day.

* * * *

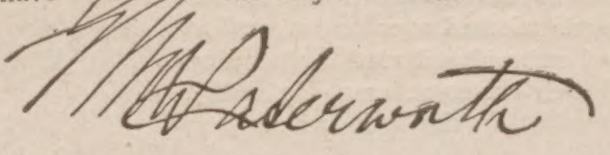
Hats are a nuisance, I know, "CHARLIE," and I sympathise with you in your wish to spare your widowed mother's pocket. If you would remember always to brush your "bowler" *before* going out, you would find it keep tidy much longer. It is the rain coming on the dusty felt that makes it turn brown.

* * * *

"BELLA" asks what she should do to her eyes. When she wakes she finds that the lids are edged with little specks, which nurses call "sleep." Smear the edges of the lids with vaseline just before you settle to sleep at night, and this unpleasantness will disappear. Be careful of your eyes. Don't work more by gas-light than you can help, and mind that you always have the light, whether real or artificial, on your *left* hand.

* * * *

You have my sympathy, poor "ELDER SISTER," on finding yourself at one-and-twenty responsible for a family of girls only a little younger than yourself. It is a difficult position to be in, but for your father's sake and that of your dead mother you must accept it bravely and do your best. As to one sister's wilful extravagance and carelessness with her clothes, why not give her so much money and let her dress herself? It is wonderful how soon the most careless youngster sometimes becomes thoughtful and economical when she has to manage her own money. There is such a difference between "finding yourself," as the saying goes, and having all found for you. The best plan with an obstreperous schoolboy is to make him monitor, and many a youngster who has begun life with extravagance and carelessness has acquired the contrary virtues when put on his honour and made responsible for his own deeds. Any way, give it a trial, "ELDER SISTER," and if good wishes can help you, you will get the very best from on, for you, with all other readers, have



HINTS ON HOME DRESSMAKING.

BY A PRACTICAL DRESSMAKER.

NOW that the month of May is out, we may safely venture on thinner garments. The careful mother will have already cast her eye over last summer's cotton dresses and decided to some extent as to how far they can be utilised for this year. Those who require new material will find an ample variety to choose from. Small checked zephyrs will take the fancy of some of our readers, while the more handsome flowered designs will attract others. Large patterns never look well for children.

Fig. 20.

Muslins will take a very important place for summer dresses of both children and adults, those with a silk finish being particularly handsome and suitable for ladies' blouses, but they will not stand much washing, and therefore are not desirable for juvenile wear. For children's pelisses, piqués are preferable to any other material shown this season; among the novelties they appear with a printed pattern, generally of the same colour. In white, buttercup, and cream, some of these are very beautiful.

Crêpon will not be much used, this dainty fabric having now about had its day. Sateen will take its place among cottons, and alpaca among woollen goods. The latter will undoubtedly wear better, some of us having very unpleasant memories of the treacherous nature of crêpon. Mohair cloth will also be much used during the present season, and is very effective with its silky finished surface.

We are glad to note a decrease in the width of dress skirts and sleeves; on the whole, there seems to be a reaction in favour of greater simplicity than has been observable for some time. Many of the tweed and serge dresses are now cut with godet skirts of moderate width, fitted carefully on the hips. They are unlined, and have a flat trimming sewn inside the hem; others are pleated all round the waist, and sometimes fastened down on the hips with rows of small buttons.

Capes and loose-fitting jackets will be largely worn. The half-fitting jacket has a short, full basque and draped circular, or coat sleeve. The seams are concealed by bands of satin stitched over narrow stripes of embroidered cloth or beading, which are sometimes of a darker shade than the foundation.

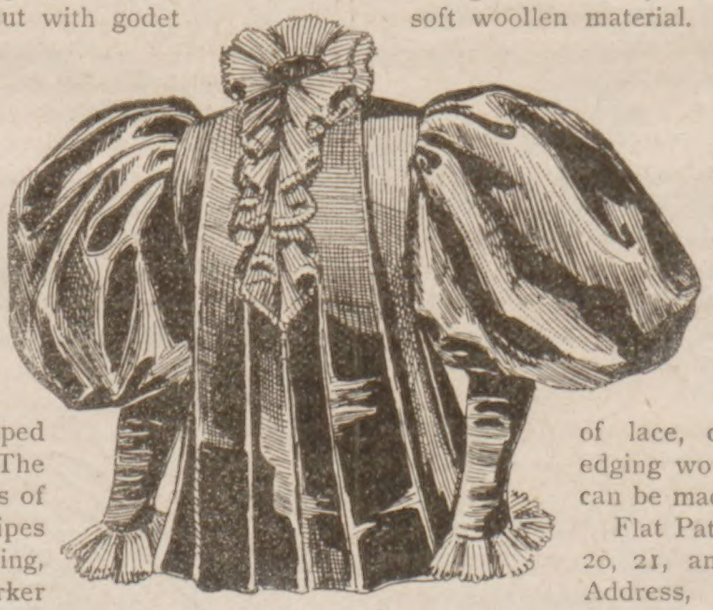


Fig. 21.

Capes are cut after the circular pattern similar to those worn a year ago, but some are wider and have gores set between the fluted folds to increase the size. They are much trimmed round the outer edge, and also on the shoulders with embroidery, flouncings of gauze, spangled net pleating or ruchings of silk or ribbon, and finished at the throat with voluminous ruffs.

Fig. 20. We show here a lady's cape made in velvet, but a lighter material can be employed with the same effect if desired. It is cut on the circular principle, and is wide enough to fall in fluted pleats down the centre of the back. Jet trimming is used in stripes from the neck, which is finished with a ruff of chiffon. Great care is needed in fitting and cutting the lining for a cape of this kind. It should be well tacked, and the edge of the cape must also be tacked up before the lining is felled down.

Fig. 22.

Fig. 21. We have here one of the fashionable sacque jackets arranged in box-pleats. One advantage with this shaped jacket is that it is easily put on and taken off; it is also easier to make than a fitting jacket. Such a jacket is frequently made of the same material as the dress, tweed or serge being very useful, and can be trimmed with rows of braid. A silk ruche is used round the neck and down the front about half way to the waist.

Fig. 22 is a lady's dress suitable in style for any soft woollen material. The plain skirt is set into the band in pleats at the back, and is fitted with dart pleats over the hips. The jacket bodice fastens down the centre, and is cut in points in the front and back, which reach just below the waist. A fancy collar, made quite separate from the dress, finishes the neck and shoulders. This can be of velvet, or a washing collar of lace, or net trimmed with lace edging would be very suitable. Cuffs can be made to match.

Flat Patterns can be supplied. Figs. 20, 21, and 22, 6½d. each, post free. Address, "M.C." Pattern, 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.